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The Montana Archivist

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

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Two More Regrant Projects Completed

articles by Anne L. Foster

Catholic Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings was established in 1904 from the Diocese of Helena. It includes all baptized Catholics living in the eastern part of Montana. The territory of the Diocese is divided into parishes and missions that are administered by pastors or pastoral administrators. The creation and maintenance of an archives is mandated by canon law.

The current archives is located in the basement of the building housing the Diocese's administrative offices. The space includes a small office area, a vault, and a separate storage area containing a compact shelving unit, map case, and microfilm machine. The storage area is adjacent to the office. The archives and the marriage tribunal—whose records remain under the office's physical custody—share the space. The archives program is the responsibility of the chancellor and is managed by an archivist, who splits her time between the archives and duties in the business office. While the archives is private, the archivist does answer a variety of research requests from outside researchers and scholars may make appointments to conduct research.

The collection consists of materials from 1904 to the present, relating to the foundation, history, parishes, schools, individuals, assets, and administration of the Diocese. Included in these records are the correspondence, administrative records, writings, and memorabilia of the bishop; documents and financial records created by the officials and staff of the administration; minutes, correspondence, financial records, and printed material of committees, curial, parochial, institutional, and confraternal groups; architectural drawings, maps, blueprints, contracts, and leases to diocesan property; sacramental and official records of closed missions and parishes; correspondence and administrative records of closed schools and hospitals; publications, including local and regional Catholic newspapers, directories, and other printed material; clippings and scrapbooks; vertical files; photographs, microfilm, video, and selected materials.

continued on page 3

Cascade County Historical Society Archives

The Cascade County Historical Society (CCHS) was founded in 1972 and incorporated in 1976. The archives originally was housed with the other museum functions in Paris Gibson Square, but due to space constraints the archives moved in 1991 to its current location on the third floor of the Great Falls Public Library. The Library's Montana Room serves as the reading room for the archives. The archives has a full-time archives administrator, a part-time archives assistant, and six to eight volunteers. The archives is open to the public forty hours per week year-round.

In addition to the records of the Historical Society, the archives houses personal papers, business records, organizational records, and is the official repository for the historically-valuable records of Cascade County government and the City of Great Falls. There are more than 200 manuscript collections, varying in size from a few items to several hundred linear feet. Significant collections include the records of Cascade County, the Great Falls Public Schools, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company's Great Falls operations, a portion of the papers of the Ford/Bovey/Couch family, papers of television broadcaster Norma Ashby, papers of the pioneer Hall family, and records of the 7th Ferrying Command. The collection includes a number of special format materials: photographs, cassette tapes, reel-to-reel recordings, and videos. Photographs are separated from the manuscript collections, but remain intellectually linked through the use of accession numbers and transfer notes in the finding aids. The oral history collection includes numerous interviews with local residents, many conducted as part of the city's centennial celebration.

The first phase of the project was an appraisal of the entire manuscript collection. Traveling Archivist Anne Foster designed an appraisal worksheet to assist with the evaluation of the collection. Foster and Archives Administrator Judy Ellinghausen examined each manu-

continued on page 3

HOW TO BASICS — Disaster Planning

by Molly Miller

In the aftermath of a major disaster, whether fire, flood, or severe weather, victims often suffer shock and are unable to act coherently. Creating a disaster plan, which contains directions for reacting and recovering, guarantees some measure of guidance for staff members directing the recovery process. The primary purpose of a disaster plan is to provide all of the information that is necessary for a successful recovery, information that might otherwise be overlooked.

The first step in creating a disaster plan is to identify the risks to your collection. These risks can include geographic or climatic hazards, building safety and stability, collection vulnerability, and administrative weaknesses. Some things to consider include the types of emergency weather that can occur in your locality. For example, is your collection housed in an area that is susceptible to floods or forest fires? Also consider the condition of your building, particularly fire protection systems, electrical systems, plumbing, and HVAC systems. The types of materials in your collections and their storage conditions can make them particularly vulnerable to certain types of disaster. Identifying problems, such as nitrate film or collections stored directly on the floor, can assist in correcting these problems as well as responding to them when a disaster occurs. A final area to consider is administrative vulnerabilities. For example, are your collections insured, do you have an up-to-date inventory stored at an off-site location, and have you set a priority list of collections to be salvaged.

DISASTER SUPPLIES

Plastic crates · Buckets
Mops · Disinfectant
Extension cords
Dust masks · Fans
First Aid kit · Flashlights
Garbage bags & cans
Rubber gloves
Paper towels
Plastic sheets · Scissors
Tape · Wet vacuum
Waxed paper · Broom

After the disaster plan coordinator or team has identified the risks to your collection and building, they can use the results of the survey to recommend changes to eliminate those risks. Some pro-active measures that can be taken to eliminate risks include regular building inspections, including fire suppression systems and HVAC units; regularly updating collection inventories and storing them at an off-site location; improving collection storage conditions; and implementing security measures.

The next step to take, prior to writing your disaster plan, is to identify sources of assistance in a disaster. Some types of information to locate are the names and telephone numbers for local police, fire, and other emergency personnel. Federal, state, and local agencies that provide disaster assistance should be identified, as well as national or regional companies that specialize is disaster recovery. Often when recovering from a disaster, paper materials can be frozen to preserve them for later recovery measures. Locating area businesses with large freezer space can also be beneficial for an emergency situation.

After identifying the risks to your collections and the resources available for assistance, writing the disaster plan is relatively simple. A disaster plan should contain an introduction, initial response procedures, emergency procedures, rehabilitation plans, and appendices. The introduction should include a description of the emergency events covered and the lines of authority for creating the plan. Initial response procedures would include whom to contact and in what order and other initial steps to be taken. The emergency procedures should include detailed information on how to respond to specific types of disasters. Rehabilitation plans consist of steps to take to return the institution to normal operations. Finally, the appendices should contain ready-reference information, such as the lists of resources available to assist in emergencies.

When writing a disaster plan, there are several things to remember. First, a disaster plan is designed for use in an emergency, so it must be straightforward and simple to use. Also, a disaster plan cannot be a static document; as your collection grows and changes, so must your plan. Staff and building changes need to be updated and included. Finally, a disaster plan is ineffective if it is not widely distributed or if staff are unaware of its existence. Copies of your plan should be given to each staff member and stored where there is ready access, as well as in at least one off-site location.

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Catholic Diocese *(cont.)*

Although the bulk of records created prior to 1904 are housed at the Diocese of Helena, the collection does include records dating as early as 1855 from several missions and parishes, including those of St. Peter's Mission [important because of the Metis Uprising connection], Fort Benton, and Havre. While the archives houses the correspondence and administrative records from a number of now closed schools, the student records—except for those of Great Falls Central Catholic High School—are housed in the office of the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools in Billings.

By the time the diocese offices moved to their present location, the amount of records was substantial and Father Dale McFarlane, a former librarian, was appointed to create order and improve access. About 1977 he created an arrangement scheme for the archives, developed a number of indexes and guides, and housed the material in a space designated for the archives. In recent years, the archives have begun to systematize the transfer of records by developing a records management plan and records schedule. The current archivist also has updated the arrangement scheme to better reflect the original order of the records and has continued to develop indexes and other descriptive tools.

The first phase of the SHRAB project was to fully develop a records retention policy and schedules. The policy expanded upon work done by Sister Pat Cormack, the former chancellor. In addition to a general policy statement and term definitions, Traveling Archivist Anne Foster created guidelines for drafting a records schedule and suggestions for implementing and using the schedules. The archivist then created a general schedule for records common to most diocesan offices and committees and forms for records transfers and logging accessions, temporary storage, and loans. Finally, Diocesan Archivist Marge Spragg researched and created a schedule specific to the records maintained in the Business Office. The draft policy and schedules were presented to the diocesan Outreach Team to explain the need for and ideas behind records management as well as to elicit comments and suggestions. Foster met with several department heads to refine individual schedules and answer preservation questions.

During the next phase of the project, Foster, Spragg, and current Chancellor Sister Mary Murray, conducted a site survey to identify natural and man-made hazards. The group also determined salvage priorities. The disaster plan included recommendations to reduce hazards and step-by-step instructions for salvaging materials affected by water, fire, mold, and pest damage. →

CCHS *(cont.)*

script collection and made recommendations to improve the arrangement, description, and preservation of the materials. Following the appraisal, Foster prioritized the processing of the collections to ensure the most significant and/or fragile records are addressed first. The appraisal identified a number of significant materials including a small collection of Burton K. Wheeler correspondence, one of the few extant letters written by Paris Gibson (founder of Great Falls), and several comprehensive collections of labor union records. The analysis also identified a number of materials that do not match the repository's mission and would better serve researchers at a different institution.

During the first week of the project, Foster conducted a basic processing workshop. The session was open to the public and included not only the staff and volunteers but also the historical society's curator and the volunteers of several local institutions and area historical societies. Following the workshop and more specialized training, CCHS Archives Assistant Larry Spicer began to process several of the priority collections. During the next phase of the project, Foster and Ellinghausen surveyed one of the larger collections, developed an arrangement scheme, and began processing.

The last week of the project involved the implementation and testing of the museum's new electronic cataloging software, PastPerfect. Foster and Ellinghausen experimented with the software and identified the capabilities and limitations of the program (which was clearly not designed by archivists!). Foster then designed and created a report program that converts the data to a narrative finding aid, matching the format already in use in the archives. Series divisions and a container list are then added so that the finding aid meets archival standards. A similar program was developed to complete the NUCMC (National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections) forms without the necessity of re-keying the information. Finally, the staff researched the Library of Congress subject headings and compiled a list of most frequently used topics to aid volunteers when cataloging.

In addition, Foster designed an exhibit policy, a collection development statement, and a guide for the preservation of parish, mission, and school records. A finding aid for the collection was drafted; record group descriptions and container list sections were partially completed to serve as examples for the continued development of the guide.

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News from Around Montana

Western Heritage Center (Billings)

Museum Loan Network Grant. The Western Heritage Center received a travel grant from the Museum Loan Network that enabled Lynda Bourque Moss, director, and Kevin Kooistra-Manning, community historian, to visit the historic home and farm of Frederick Billings in Woodstock, Vermont, the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, and the Billings Farm and Museum. They evaluated archival materials and artifact collections to secure the loan of artifacts that will document the life of Frederick Billings in a fall 2001 exhibit to honor the 100th anniversary of the Parmly Billings Memorial Library and the thirtieth anniversary of the Western Heritage Center.

Staff Changes. Kathy Mosdal O'Brien has left the Western Heritage Center to return to classroom teaching in Billings. This summer she will be teaching "Literature of Montana and the American West" for the Rocky Mountain College English Department. O'Brien will remain a member of the Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board. Darla Bruner, formerly with the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, will replace O'Brien.

Grantsmanship Website

Organizations applying for government grants have a new internet-based resource that provides instant access to top-ranked, funded grant proposals. The Grantsmanship Center, a national training organizaiton specializing in grant information, has compiled a database consisting of more than 650 proposals, all of which were selected by major government funders from among their highest-rated grant applications.

The entire collection of proposal abstracts may be searched free of charge. Searches can be done by subject, keyword, grantmaking agency, of CFDA number. Copies of full proposals on CD-ROM also are available.

The arts and humanities section of the website includes top-ranked proposals from funding competitions administered by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The site does not, however, include the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

The address of the website is:
<http://www.TGCIgrantproposals.com>.